

# St Patrick's Catholic Primary School

## Emergency School Closure Policy



Approved: December 2021

Date of next review: December 2022

## **INTRODUCTION**

Within the limitations set out by statutory guidance and health and safety legislation and wherever possible, St Patrick's Catholic Primary School will remain open during the school day to deliver education to its pupils. This statement supports the school's aspiration to deliver the highest quality educational provision to its pupils. However, the Headteacher (or their Deputy in their absence) is authorised to make an emergency closure when exceptional circumstances make it absolutely necessary and in the best interests of the pupils.

## **CLOSURE OF THE SCHOOL**

The following will be considered before coming to any decision to close the school for exceptional reasons (Step 2):

Health and Safety Requirements:

- Can pupils and staff access the school building safely?
- Can pupils and staff be evacuated in an emergency?
- In an emergency, could the Emergency Services access the school?
- Is the area designated for disembarkation from transport safe for pupils?

Pupil:Teacher Ratios:

- If a limited number of staff and pupils can attend, is the pupil:teacher ratio acceptable (30:1)?

Weather and Road Conditions:

- Have local weather forecasts and road conditions, including those for areas from which staff will be travelling, been considered?

The Headteacher will carry out a risk assessment (Step 3), in consultation with the Chair of Governors (or if he/she is unavailable, the Vice-Chair) and members of staff using common sense to determine whether it is feasible for children and staff to remain in the school; and if not, what subsequent risks could arise by sending them home. Before school hours start, schools are also asked to assess if the roads are safe for children to travel to school.

The decision will be made where possible before 8.00am and, on the basis of information received from the relevant authorities regarding weather, supplemented by on-the-spot observation, either personally or from staff members better placed to make such observations, and through appropriate external agencies such as the Met Office and Metropolitan Police (Step 4).

## **CLOSURE DURING THE SCHOOL DAY**

On occasions it may be necessary for school to close during the school day, i.e. if the weather is deteriorating and there is doubt as to whether children can return home safely later in the day, or due to health and safety considerations. In such cases, the school will ensure that children are collected from school.

## **IN THE EVENT OF SCHOOL BEING CLOSED**

If school is closed, it is the responsibility of the Headteacher to ensure that the following events happen:

- The decision is ratified with the Chair or Vice-Chair of Governors;
- Parents are contacted using the school's text messaging service;
- The school website is updated;
- Staff and/or a notice will be posted at the school gates to help prevent pupils from being left by parents at the start of the school day if possible. In instances of severe weather, parents should monitor the nominated phone for text contact;
- School is appropriately staffed by teachers/classroom assistants to deal with any pupils who arrive at school unescorted until parents or emergency contacts can collect the pupils;
- Waltham Forest Council is notified via text message to the emergency telephone number 07760 165076. The information provided must confirm the name of the school, the volume of closure i.e. partial, full or set years/areas of the school and the emergency contact name for the day of closure.

These tasks do not all have to be completed by the Headteacher, although he/she has the overall responsibility for ensuring each has been carried out.

### **SAFEGUARDING PRECAUTIONS ON CLOSURE**

No pupil will be allowed to leave school unless the school is aware that an identified adult will be available to supervise him/her at their destination. It may be that a parent who collects his/her children offers to give shelter to other children. The agreement of the parents of these children must be given before pupils are released in this way. We will ensure that adequate supervision by members of teaching staff will be made for those pupils who cannot go home or to their emergency destination immediately and therefore have to remain at school.

### **TRAVEL TO AND FROM SCHOOL**

Parents should be aware that it is their responsibility to make sensible decisions on behalf of their children when weather conditions are severe. Parents are responsible for the safety of their children to and from the school.

### **EMERGENCY CONTACTS**

Parents must give school an emergency contact point. Data Collection forms are sent out annually to all parents. Parents are required to complete and return the forms promptly. If the forms are not returned, the previous year's form will be annotated as such and kept on file. Information on emergency contacts and instructions in respect of each pupil will be held centrally in the emergency contacts folder held in the school office.

**It is essential that parents keep the school up-to-date with any change in their contact details.**

### **STAFF ATTENDANCE**

Although it is recognised that severe weather conditions make it difficult for staff to get to and from work, unless advised to the contrary by the Headteacher, then the expectation is that staff will present themselves for work. Staff provided through supply agencies also need to be advised of any emergency requirements.

**CLEARANCE OF SNOW**

Within the school site, the school is responsible for snow clearance and the clearing of approach paths is the specific task of the Building Supervisor. When severe weather is forecast, the Building Supervisor should be tasked to lay salt and grit on arrival. The clearance of public roads is the responsibility of the Roads Service.

**CHILDREN'S PLAYTIMES**

If there is any question of children's safety being at risk during break-time and lunch-time whereby the playground area is deemed unsafe, school has a responsibility in inclement weather to keep the children indoors.

**SERVICES**

All of the service providers who will be affected by the closure will be informed as soon as possible, once families and staff have been contacted.

**MONITORING AND REVIEW**

The Headteacher will monitor implementation of this policy. St Patrick's Catholic Primary School Emergency Closure Policy will be evaluated and reviewed in line with any new Department for Education Guidelines/Reports and in keeping with any additional practices and procedures.

## Step 1 – Preparation

The following points require to be taken into account when preparing a plan to deal with a possible exceptional closure due to severe weather.

KEY ACTION	SUPPLEMENTARY ACTIONS
<p>Does the school have contact details for all parents/guardians, pupils and staff?</p> <p>Does the school have contact details for the relevant LA emergency on-call officers?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> All contact details are updated annually and when parents/guardians inform of any change. This includes mobile numbers to use for text service.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> See step 4 of this document.</li> </ul>
<p>Where renewable fuel is required ensure that fuel level is checked regularly and appropriate levels maintained.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Set a minimum fuel level for re-order of supply.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Check fuel level frequently during severe weather periods.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Back-up gas boilers are also in place.</li> </ul>
<p>Ensure that heating, lighting and water services are regularly maintained.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Regularly report maintenance issues to the SBM</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Emergency on-call officer telephone numbers are available in the school's phone directory.</li> </ul>
<p>Maintain sufficient supplies of salt for application to footpaths and driveways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Order supplies before the onset of winter.</li> </ul>
<p>Maintain stocks of Hazard Warning Tapes for cordoning off hazardous areas.</p> <p>Purchase warning signs that can be set out in slippery conditions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The SSO will maintain supplies of Hazard tape (yellow/black or red/white).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The SSO is to set these signs out on the appropriate occasions.</li> </ul>

<p>Maintain a system of communicating with teachers, support staff, operational and administrative staff as well as staff supplied through an agency.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Headteacher and staff have an effective means of two-way communication to determine the level of attendance. This will be done through text service and school website. Staff can also contact school or Headteacher on his/her mobile.</p>
<p>Prepare a risk assessment which considers the foreseeable risks at times of severe weather.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Risk assessment has been prepared and reviewed as necessary.</p>
<p>Avoid slips, trips and falls at access points into the school building.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Maintain adequate supplies of mops and wet trip mats.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Increased vigilance from SSO/staff to ensure points of access are kept in safe condition.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Use of warning cones/signs.</p>
<p>Prepare and maintain local contact details for the following services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meteorological Service;</li> <li>• Castle Water;</li> <li>• Road Service;</li> <li>• Rivers Agency;</li> <li>• Local Education Authority;</li> <li>• Department for Education;</li> <li>• Metropolitan Police;</li> <li>• London Fire Brigade.</li> </ul>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> A record of contact details is kept in step 4 of this document.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Access the sites and become familiar with the layout and where to look for the appropriate information.</p>



## Step 2 – Points to consider when deciding to open the school

The decision to open the school or to continue to operate the school is dependent upon the Headteacher carrying out a risk assessment. The risk assessment needs to be reviewed and updated in the light of changes in the weather and circumstances.

The following points are key considerations when determining whether to open or close the school. They also form an integral part of the risk assessment process and will allow the Headteacher to prepare a school specific risk assessment.

First Consideration	Other consideration(s)
Is the school building accessible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What are the forecasted long-term weather conditions? <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>Are there any Met Office warnings available?</li> </ul>
Are there any areas within the school locality especially impassable or dangerous in times of extreme bad weather?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Consideration should be given to getting to and from school. In the case of one-way traffic systems, the route into school may be a lesser gradient than the route away.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There may be locations on the journey where snow/ice is known to cause early closure of roads or rail.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Alternative routes where possible should be identified prior to extreme bad weather to help the traveller to decide their route.</li> </ul>
Are vehicle routes into the school grounds passable?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is there a means to improve access prior to teachers' attendance or attendance of parent/carers' vehicles etc.?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is parking possible outside the school grounds until remedial action has been taken to make the area passable? If a main pedestrian route, inside the school grounds, is through a vehicle parking area then vehicles should be excluded. There may be a need for signage to this effect.</li> </ul>
Are pedestrian routes on the school grounds passable?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is there means to clear these routes, e.g. salt/grit?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If required, can movement to various parts of the school be limited without disruption – ensuring maintenance is concerted to general access routes?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Can priority be made in respect to slopes, steps or ramps, or can these areas be restricted from use? Outside metal staircases should also be avoided unless appropriately treated.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If open, vehicle parking areas should have a passable pedestrian route to access the school.</li> </ul>
Can the Headteacher gain enough teaching and/or supervisory staff to operate safely?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The emphasis would be to operate safely.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> What would be the threshold of staff numbers in respect to expected pupils?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils are mostly local, with a greater expectancy of attendance.
Is the school appropriately heated?	<input type="checkbox"/> Have there been previous failures of the heating system in autumn/winter months?
	<input type="checkbox"/> Is the means for remedial action readily available?
Are water systems working appropriately? (Welfare)	<input type="checkbox"/> Are there known faults in times of severe weather?
Can the level of heating be maintained throughout the school day/week?	<input type="checkbox"/> At times of severe weather consider running the heating system during periods of closure or holidays. <input type="checkbox"/> Is frost protection installed and utilised?
Restriction of outside play would limit the snow/ice from becoming compacted and therefore more dangerous.	<input type="checkbox"/> If conditions are not dangerous outside play may be possible, however supervision may have to be higher. <input type="checkbox"/> Could play or breaks be staggered to ensure appropriate supervisory levels? <input type="checkbox"/> If any snow or ice is present, prohibit running.
Can the school grounds be maintained to affect opening the following day?	<input type="checkbox"/> Pedestrian walkways should be a priority, over vehicle parking, but in the long term, parking areas inside the school should be treated or cleared of snow. Persons who have parked in the school grounds should be aware of the priority and told to take care in this area. Signs could be placed to remind these persons. <input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance should be a priority where pedestrian walkways also coincide with vehicle areas. Alternatively, restrictions could be made on pedestrians or cars stopped from entering that area.
Monitor the weather situation locally and through the media (Met Office)	<input type="checkbox"/> Government Agencies such as the Roads Service may be able to provide information regarding road clearance, providing assurance of home journeys, or return journeys the following day. <input type="checkbox"/> Met Office provide flash weather warnings (see Met Office website)
Are maintenance materials and personnel available to ensure the school can eliminate, reduce or isolate risk throughout the school day?	<input type="checkbox"/> Can similar provision be assured for the following day(s)? <input type="checkbox"/> Salt/grit spread on walkways or other areas at the end of the day could limit icing. This could also prevent a further snowfall from taking a foothold and re-icing. <input type="checkbox"/> Slush or water from thawed snow/ice should be cleared as much as possible to prevent re-icing. Iced slush could be more dangerous than the initial fall as surfaces may be uneven and more slippery.



**Step 3**

**RISK ASSESSMENT for St Patrick’s Catholic Primary School: Severe Weather – Ice/Snow**

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>HAZARD</b>	<b>PERSONS WHO MAY BE AT RISK</b>	<b>CONTROLS REQUIRED</b>	<b>FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS</b>
Getting to school.	Dangerous travel in extreme bad weather conditions.	Headteacher, teachers, building supervisor(s) and/or maintenance staff, pupils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headteacher monitors weather conditions/warnings. <a href="http://www.metoffice.gov.uk">www.metoffice.gov.uk</a></li> <li>• No travel should be considered if extreme bad weather warning and advice given for only essential journeys to be undertaken.</li> </ul>	The majority of staff live in urban area so a high proportion travel on treated roads. Regional warnings may not be accurate at local level so local media broadcasts may also help.
Informing parents/staff of closure/restricted entry points.	May try to make a needless journey.	Headteacher, teachers, building supervisor(s) and/or maintenance staff, pupils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early decision-making on whether school will remain open.</li> <li>• If school remains open what are the access arrangements?</li> </ul>	Parents/staff will be informed through the text service and the school website. They can also check the local BBC media as they will be informed by school of any closure.
Travel via known areas of steep gradient.	Dangerous travel in extreme bad weather conditions.	Headteacher, teachers, building supervisor(s) and/or maintenance staff, pupils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior planning by staff regarding alternative route rather than coming up the Pond Park Road to school</li> </ul>	Walking may be reasonably expected when cars or other vehicles cannot make it all the way into school.

Main entrance into school grounds.	Entrance not possible.	Headteacher, teachers, building supervisor(s) and/or maintenance staff, pupils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Park car outside school until clearance can be made. If not passable by foot, access by other reasonable means into school.</li> </ul>	Inform parents and staff via text and school website of what entrances are open. A note prior to bad weather conditions will go out to explain school procedures during severe snow/ice.
Main entrance into school grounds.	Entrance an immediate slip hazard.	Headteacher, teachers, building supervisor(s) and/or maintenance staff, pupils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearance of slip hazard, unless alternative route found.</li> <li>• Other routes may be prioritised and cause closure of the main entrance.</li> <li>• Salt/grit may be adequate but manual work may also be required to clear snow/ice.</li> </ul>	Ensure salt is available throughout the day in case ground begins to freeze again.
Getting appropriate members of staff to open school.	Inadequate supervision.	Teachers and pupils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A structure of sending and receiving text messages to ensure Headteacher knows what staff will be present in school. Headteacher to establish what would constitute appropriate supervision – through dynamic assessment on the day of extreme bad weather.</li> </ul>	The emphasis will be on how to operate safely, not whether a full and normal curriculum could be followed. The majority of our pupils live locally and would most likely be able to walk to school.

Access to school buildings.	Slips, trips or falls.	All building users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salting/gritting could be undertaken when snow or ice is foreseeable.</li> <li>• Salt/grit spreading on pedestrian walkways and snow clearance where reasonable.</li> </ul>	Extreme bad weather is generally forecast, although snow/ice can be worse or less than expected, depending on local geography. If school's salt/grit stock is low then only main walkways may be treated and parents advised via website and text of what entrance is available. Treatment of inner areas such as play parks or some walkways around building may be less of a priority.
Heating and Welfare facilities.	Cold – below Advised work level (16°C). No sanitary or drinking water.	All building users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constant heating throughout periods of known cold snaps to prevent frozen pipes.</li> <li>• Maintenance of water systems, for example prompt repair of leaks and drips.</li> <li>• Regular maintenance staff checks to ensure heating and water systems are working well.</li> </ul>	If the school premises cannot be heated or provision of water for sanitary use or drinking cannot be made within school hours then the school will have to close.

Keeping the school open.	Slips, trips or falls of pupils at break time.	Pupils and support staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No use of playgrounds and other external areas, when snow/ice cannot be easily removed or reduced.</li> <li>• If there are external areas free or generally free of snow/ice, supervised play/break can be undertaken.</li> <li>• The supervision level should be higher and running prohibited. Any areas of snow/ice remaining should be avoided and managed.</li> <li>• Pupils should be informed of restrictions.</li> </ul>	If playground space is restricted, then children will not get out to play until snow/ice has been cleared.
Keeping the school open.	Further snow or ice, or icing of previous fall.	All building users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headteacher to monitor the weather conditions through the Met Office and local media.</li> <li>• Information may also be gained from the LA.</li> <li>• Further salt/grit could be used on walkways and other areas to minimise risk for the next day.</li> <li>• Surface water could be brushed to drains to avoid icing up overnight.</li> </ul>	Further stock of salt/grit could be organised and/or maintenance undertaken on water or heating systems to ensure they continue to work effectively.

#### STEP 4 – KEY WEBSITES AND CONTACTS

- |                        |               |   |
|------------------------|---------------|---|
| 1. Met Office          |               | <a href="http://www.metoffice.gov.uk">www.metoffice.gov.uk</a>                      |
| 2. TfL                 |               | <a href="https://tfl.gov.uk/traffic/status/">https://tfl.gov.uk/traffic/status/</a> |
| 3. Castle Water        |               | <a href="https://www.castlewater.co.uk/">https://www.castlewater.co.uk/</a>         |
| 4. Metropolitan Police | 101           | <a href="https://www.met.police.uk/">https://www.met.police.uk/</a>                 |
| 5. NI Fire and Rescue  | 020 8555 1200 | <a href="https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/">https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/</a>       |
| 6. LBWF                | 07760 165 076 |   |